

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 GUATEM 00316 180002Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----035910 180006Z /12
O 171803Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8813

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 0316

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 AND 2
SUBJ: BELIZE: COMMENTS ON SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH ROWLANDS

REF: STATE 10309

1. WHILE WE HAVE NO INSIGHT INTO ROWLANDS' SOURCES, I AGREE WITH THEM THAT A TRUE MEDIATION, AS OPPOSED TO ONE INVOLVING THE PRE-AGREEMENT OF THE PARTIES, WOULD BE LESS LIKELY TO BE APPROVED BY GUATEMALA. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THIS WOULD ESPECIALLY BE THE CASE IF, AS PRICE APPEARS TO BE BETTING, THE RESULT OF SUCH A MEDIATION WERE TO BE A FORMULA MORE FAVORABLE TO PRICE THAN THE ONE ON WHICH TENTATIVE AGREEMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN REACHED. MOREOVER, SUCH A MEDIATION PROCESS WOULD INEVITABLY BE MORE TIME-CONSUMING, INCREASING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE ISSUE WOULD NOT BE RESOLVED DURING PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S ADMINISTRATION. AS OTHER MESSAGES IN THIS SERIES HAVE INDICATED, WE BELIEVE THAT CURRENT MOMENTUM WILL PROBABLY BE LOST IF THE ISSUE IS ALLOWED TO PASS LAUGERUD'S SUCCESSOR, WHOEVER HE PROVES TO BE. IT HAS BEEN OUR JUDGMENT THAT NEITHER LUCAS NOR PERALTA AZURDIA SEEM AS WELL-DISPOSED AS LAUGERUD TO BLESS A SETTLEMENT RELINQUISHING THE BULK OF GUATEMALA'S HISTORICAL CLAIM, WHILE PERALTA MENDEZ, WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE BE MORE AMENABLE, WOULD PROBABLY NOT ENJOY THE POLITICAL FREEDOM OF ACTION ENABLING HIM TO RUN THAT RISK.

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WM I ALSO HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE DESIRABILITY -- FROM THE STANDPOINT OF OUR OWN INTERESTS -- OF CONDUCTING THE MEDIATION UNDER THE EXPLICIT AEGIS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. AT BEST, THIS WOULD EXPOSE US TO RECRIMINATION IN BOTH GUATEMALA AND BELIZE BY THOSE ELEMENTS WHO WILL SEE THE SETTLEMENT AS A BETRAYAL OF THEIR NATIONAL INTEREST. WHATEVER FORM OF MEDIATION IS DECIDED UPON, IT WOULD BE MORE PRUDENT FOR US,

IN MY VIEW, FOR THE PARTIES TO SELECT A MEDIATOR INDEPENDENTLY, ALBEIT WITH OUR INFORMAL GOOD OFFICES.

3. I AM SOMEWHAT CONCERNED, IN SUM, THAT THE POSITION WHICH APPEARS TO BE EMERGING BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND PRICE MAY FALL ENOUGH SHORT OF GUATEMALAN REQUIREMENTS AS TO THREATEN THE SUCCESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, ESPECIALLY AS THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE ARRANGEMENTS IS GETTING SHORT. I NOT ONLY BELIEVE THAT PRESIDENT LAUGERUD MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH THE CONCEPT OF A TRUE MEDIATION BUT THAT HE WILL BE SERIOUSLY DISAPPOINTED WHEN HE LEARNS THAT THE BRITISH ARE NO CLOSER TO MEETING HIS REQUEST FOR A ROAD PROJECT IN GUATEMALA THAN APPEARS TO BE THE CASE FROM ROWLANDS' PRESENTATION TO THE SECRETARY. AS OF THE LAST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS, AT LEAST, THIS WAS THE MAIN STICKING POINT ON THE GUATEMALAN SIDE AFTER THEY HAD MADE WHAT THEY CONSIDERED TO BE A CAPITAL SACRIFICE ON THE ISSUE OF TERRITORY.

4. DEPARTMENT PASS AS DESIRED.
BOSTER

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, MEETINGS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GUATEM00316
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DE IS ALSO X1
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840166-1813, N780001-0519
Format: TEL
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780156/aaaabveb.tel
Line Count: 81
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e5d2cfe2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 STATE 10309
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3764348
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELIZE: COMMENTS ON SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH ROWLANDS
TAGS: PBOR, PGOV, GT, BH, UK, (VANCE, CYRUS R), (ROWLANDS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e5d2cfe2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014